

## Why Are Alcohol Problems Too Significant to Overlook?: Important Facts

- At-Risk drinking raises the risk for high blood pressure, heart disease, certain cancers, fractures, violence, suicides, trauma, and medication non-adherence.
- Alcohol abuse costs \$185 billion annually.

### Alcohol and Women

- Women drink less than men but are more likely to experience adverse consequences.
- The progression to alcohol dependence is faster in women than in men.

### Alcohol and Older Drinkers

- While persons aged 65 and older may consume less alcohol than younger drinkers, aging increases sensitivity to alcohol and heightens the risk for traffic crashes, medication interactions, falls, cognitive impairment, and medical problems.<sup>4</sup>

#### Selected References

1. Connors, G. and Volk, R. "Self-Report Screening for Alcohol Problems Among Adults" [www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/Assesing%20Alcohol/connors.pdf](http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/Assesing%20Alcohol/connors.pdf)
2. National Alcohol Screening Day [www.mentalhealthscreening.org/alcohol/enews/04\\_February.htm](http://www.mentalhealthscreening.org/alcohol/enews/04_February.htm)
3. Alcohol Alert: Screening for Alcohol—An update [www.niaaa.nih.gov/](http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/)
4. National Alcohol Screening Day Fact Sheet [www.nationalalcoholscreeningday.org/](http://www.nationalalcoholscreeningday.org/)

### Screening



The Audit C identifies patients who are drinking at levels that may be hazardous to their health

### Assessment



The BHL conducts a comprehensive evaluation of the patient

### Advice



The BHL provides recommendations for brief interventions or specialty care

### Monitoring

The BHL can provide monitoring to track progress

For BHL Assessments, the Health Technicians can be reached toll free at:

**(877)BHL FOR U — (877) 245-3678**

Questions about the BHL can be answered by:

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# Assessing Risks of Alcohol Use Using The Behavioral Health Laboratory (BHL)



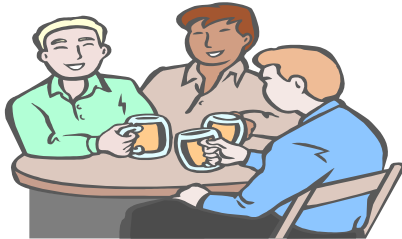
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### Why is screening for alcohol important in primary care?

- The prevalence of alcohol problems is high and the costs both economically and health related are also high.

### What drinking problems does screening identify?

- The AUDIT-C identifies patients with alcohol dependence **and** drinking patterns that may place them at increased risk for developing health problems or alcoholism (At-Risk Drinking).
- About 15% of American adults are At-Risk Drinkers.
- At-Risk Drinkers can often be managed with advice and brief interventions and may not need formal treatment in order to drink responsibly.



### Positive AUDIT-C: What next?

- Screenings are not designed to explicate the nature and extent of alcohol problems.
- All positive screens should initiate a formal assessment to determine the appropriate level of advice or treatment.

### What are the goals for the patient?

- The **goal** for at-risk drinkers is to drink responsibly in order to reduce the harmful effects of heavy drinking.
- The **goal** for those with dependence is engagement in formal treatment and often abstinence.

### How can patients be further assessed?

- **The Behavioral Health Laboratory (BHL)** is a clinical service that provides comprehensive mental health and substance abuse assessments for primary care patients.
- The BHL functions much like a clinical chemistry laboratory, conducting specific tests and sending the test results back to the clinician with guidelines for their interpretation and recommendations to assist in clinical decision-making.



### Who should be referred for further assessment?

- All patients who screen positive (moderate and high risk patients) should be further evaluated and counseled on their drinking.
- The best course of action for drinkers who maintain they do not have problems is a systematic assessment by the BHL which would document the absence of problems.



### How can the BHL help?

- The BHL assessment helps separate responsible drinking from At-Risk drinking in those who screened positive.
- The BHL will provide the primary care team with a comprehensive assessment.
- The BHL identifies the need for further follow ups and issues that can be discussed at the next primary care visit.
- Assessment by the BHL will also allow rapid triage for those who do need referral to the Behavioral Health Clinic or Alcohol Clinic.

